DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 046 621 RE 003 184

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TITLE Unlocking the Door to Literacy.
INSTITUTION Santa Barbara Elementary and High School District, Calif.
PUB DATE [70]
NOTE 7p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Kindergarten Children, Negro Youth, *Reading Programs, *Reading Readiness, *Reading Research, *Spanish Americans

ABSTRACT

Investigated in this pilot experiment was a reading readiness program designed to introduce to kindergarten children the prereading skills necessary for later success in reading. Eighty-one children, primarily of Spanish origin or Negro, participated in the study. The 42 experimental subjects received instruction in the reading readiness program, while the control group did not. At the end of the school year, the Murphy-Durrell Reading Readiness Analysis was administered to all children. The results were presented according to ethnic distribution and stanine-percentage range distribution of the experimental and control groups. In the experimental group, 37 percent of the boys and 61 percent of the girls scored above the sixth stanine; none of the control subjects scored above the sixth stanine. It was concluded that most of the children in the experimental program were ready for formal reading instruction upon entering first grade. Related to this study is a report by the same author in which she describes the kindergarten reading readiness program. The clearinghouse access number for this study is RE 003 185. Tables are included. (DH)

ED046621

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UNLOCKING THE DOOR TO LITERACY

"If you will smile when you work with children, you may participate in my kindergarten reading readiness pilot program," stated Dr. Jo M. Stanchfield, Professor of Education, Occidental College, to the teachers attending a reading meeting. Her philosophy is that children learn more effectively when they are actively involved with a teacher who smiles and shows her love and respect for them. With that challenge, two Franklin teachers, along with their principal, were invited to participate in a year long reading readiness workshop.

The purpose of the reading readiness program was to introduce to kindergarten children the pre-reading skills that are necessary for later success and satisfaction in reading.

The reading readiness program is built on the premise that the skills in the reading process are the same at the pre-reading level as at the highest stage of reading development, the chief differences being degree and refinement. Developing the ability to comprehend and interpret ideas symbolized in writing and printing should begin when a child first enters school and continue during his entire educational program.

Purposeful reading is dependent upon a strong foundation of the skills in listening, auditory discrimination, visual discrimination, oral language, sound-symbol correspondences, and in the motor perceptual areas. The teaching of these skills should begin in the reading readiness program and inter-related with the other skills in each daily lesson. These skills should not be taught in isolation.

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During the fall of 1968, forty-two children from the Franklin School kindergarten participated in the program. They received instruction in small groups on a daily basis with emphasis on the above skills. At the end of the year, the Murphy-Durrell Reading Readiness Analysis was administered to all students in the two classes. It was also given to two selected kindergarten classes in another target area school with students of similar backgrounds and abilities who had not received instruction in the program.

The Murphy-Durrell Reading Readiness Analysis measures the student's ability to identify separate sounds in spoken words and to recognize the names of capital and lower-case letters. It also measures the number of words a child can recognize after formal instruction. Children who have good backgrounds in these areas are usually ready to start a formal reading program.

Below is a summary of the results of the test.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN PILOT PROGRAM

	Experimental	Control
ETHNIC BACKGROUND	FRANKLIN	TARGET SCHOOL
Spanish Surname	30	27
Negro	11	5
Oriental	0	1
White	1	6
TOTAL	42	39

TABLE NO. 1

Table No. 1 shows the number of students in the different ethnic groups who participated in the study.

MURPHY-DURRELL READING READINESS ANALYSIS

DISTRIBUTION OF BOYS AND GIRLS

	Experimental				Control			
STANINES	BOYS	%	GIRLS	%	BOYS	%	GIRLS	%
9		37	1	61		0		0
8	5		6					
7	2		7					
6	6	58	3	26	1	68	5	70
5	3		1		6		5	
4	2		2		6		4	
3	1	5	1	13	5	32	2	30
2					1		3	
1			2				1	
Total	19		23		19		20	

TABLE NO. 2

The distribution of boys and girls in the experimental and control groups is shown on Table No. 2. In the experimental group 37 percent of the boys and 61 percent of the girls were in the upper three stanines, 58 percent boys and 26 percent girls in the middle three stanines, 5 percent boys and 13 percent girls in the lower three stanines.

The control group had 68 percent boys and 70 percent girls in the middle three stanines with 32 percent boys and 30 percent girls in the lowest three stanines.

ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION

	Experimental												Control											
Stanine	Span. Surname		%	Negro		%	Orient		%	White		%	Span. Surname		%	Negro		%	Orient		%	White		%
	B	G		B	G		B	G		B	G		B	G		B	G		B	G		B	G	
9		1																						
8	3	3	47	2	2	55					1	100			0			0			0			0
7	2	5			2																			
6	3	4		2									1	2			1					1	1	
5	3		40		1	45							4	3	59		1	83	1		100	1	1	100
4	1	1		1	1								5	1			2					1	1	
3	1	1											4	2			1							
2			13			0							1	3	41			17						
1		2												1										
Tot	13	17		5	6						1		15	12			5		1			3	3	

TABLE NO. 3

The result of the year's program as measured by the Murphy-Durrel Reading Readiness Analysis is shown on Table No. 3. The figures show the number of boys and girls in each ethnic group and their placement in the nine stanines for both the experimental and control groups. Forty-seven percent of the students with Spanish surnames were in the upper three stanines, 40 percent in the middle three stanines, and 13 percent in the last three stanines. With the Negro student, 55 percent were in the top three stanines, 45 percent in the middle three stanines, and none in the lowest three stanines.

The one participating white student placed in the upper three stanines. There were no other ethnic groups participating in the study.

In the control group, there were no students in the upper three stanines in any of the ethnic groups. Fifty-nine percent of the students with Spanish surnames were in the middle three stanines and 41 percent in the lowest three stanines.

Eighty-three percent of the Negro children were in the middle three stanines with 17 percent in the lowest three stanines. One hundred percent of both the Oriental and white students were in the middle three stanines.

STANINE-PERCENTAGE RANGE DISTRIBUTION

Experimental					Control				
Stanine	No. of Students	Percentage	No. of Students	Percentage	Stanine	No. of Students	Percentage	No. of Students	Percentage
9	1	2.4	21	50	9			0	0
8	11	26.2			8				
7	9	21.4			7				
6	9	21.4	17	40.4	6	6	15.4	27	69.2
5	4	9.5			5	11	28.2		
4	4	9.5			4	10	25.6		
3	2	4.8	4	9.6	3	7	17.9	12	30.8
2	0	0			2	4	10.3		
1	2	4.8			1	1	2.6		

TABLE NO. 4

Table No. 4 shows the number and percent of students scoring in each stanine and the number and percent scoring in the top, middle, and bottom stanines for the experimental and control groups.

The following conclusions can be made based on the results of the pilot program.

... The test results indicate that most of the children were ready for formal reading instruction upon entering first grade this year.

... Both boys and girls made significant gains in the pre-reading skills.

... All ethnic groups participating in the program made substantial gains with the majority scoring in the first six stanines.

The teachers in the pilot program were enthusiastic and pleased with the results of the achievements of the students. They felt that the students were more academically ready for first grade work than with previous kindergarten classes. Many of the students asked when they would be given the opportunity to start reading. It was felt that the pilot program, financed through E.S.E.A., Title I funds, was highly successful.

As a follow-up study on March 15, 1970, it was found that of the 42 children who started in the pilot program, 31 were still at Franklin, 5 were attending a parochial school, 3 were in non-target schools, 2 left without notifying the school, and one moved out of the district.

The 31 children had been placed with 5 different teachers. They reported that 8 children were reading in the state adopted pre-primers, 14 were reading the basic primer, and 9 were in the first reader.

Each teacher was asked to judge what level the children would be reading at the close of the school year. Of the 31 children, the 5 teachers felt that 6 would be reading pre-primers, 4 in the primer, and 21 would have completed the first basic reader.

Four of the five children attending the parochial school were reading a first grade book.

For the most part, the teachers described the students' general attitude with such terms as "enthusiastic", "interested", "eager to learn", "happy", and "good".

The children's achievement was described with "excellent", "good", "average plus", and "average minus".

Commenting on the over all performance, the teachers stated that the children had good listening habits, made good use of sounds, were quick to get main idea and details.

One teacher summarized her findings by stating, "Over all, I've noticed with these children ...

... better listening habits
... better skills in the reading group
... able to sound out words in many cases
... eager to learn
... able to ask and answer pertinent questions

Even the ones having a harder time, have good 'tools'. I know they have been taught specifics!"